

[The New York Times](#)

More than 40 members of Congress called on six big financial firms on Thursday to halt their executive bonuses and return money to the government from bonuses that were challenged by Kenneth R. Feinberg, the Treasury's departing special master for executive compensation.

In a report last week, Mr. Feinberg identified 17 banks that made questionable bonus payments totaling \$1.58 billion after accepting billions of dollars in bailout money from the government. Six of those firms — the American International Group, Citigroup, the CIT Group, M&T Bank, Regions Financial and SunTrust Banks — have yet to fully repay all the money they received from the government's Troubled Asset Relief Program.

Representative Peter Welch, Democrat of Vermont, said in a statement that he had been joined by 40 other lawmakers in sending letters to the chairmen of the six firms urging them to halt all bonus compensation until they have repaid all of their TARP money and to claw back any "questionable bonuses" and return that money to the government.

Letter from Lawmakers to Six Financial Firms:

Dear Chairman of the Board of Directors,

Why is it that, when it comes to Wall Street compensation, enough is never enough? Why is it that Wall Street remains tone deaf and blind to the struggles of working Americans? Why is it that Wall Street increases bonuses to executives while eliminating lending to small businesses?

We are extremely disappointed to learn that Kenneth Feinberg has identified your company as one of 17 troubled banks that paid out questionable bonuses immediately after accepting 2008 taxpayer assistance that helped prevent the failure of your institution. Further, it is our understanding that your bank may be preparing to again pay excessive bonuses to your executives in spite of the fact that you have not yet fully repaid the taxpayer.

This news hits at a time when the very taxpayers who threw a lifeline to your bank are struggling to stay afloat in an economy driven to the brink of collapse by the actions of Wall Street. And, small businesses are struggling to keep their doors open because they cannot get loans from the same Wall Street banks they helped bailout.

We urge you to:

Stop all bonus compensation to your executives until you have completely repaid the taxpayer, with interest; and

Return to the taxpayer the questionable bonuses identified by Mr. Feinberg that were made possible through taxpayer funded lifelines.

It would be cynical in the extreme for you to thumb your nose at the American public by continuing excessive payouts while your company is in debt to the taxpayer. We expect you to take immediate action to address the issues we have raised in this letter and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Mr. Welch took to the floor of the House this week to discuss why executive compensation needed to be restricted at the six financial firms.

[Go to Press Release from Representative Peter Welch »](#)

[Go to Video of Representative Peter Welch on the House Floor via YouTube »](#)

